Agenda Item #10

URBAN CORRIDORS – SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND HOV PROJECT

BRIEFING PAPER
Prepared for the
May 2004 Transportation Commission Meeting

Prepared by: Maureen Sullivan, Project Director, Urban Corridors Office
Reviewed by: David Dye, Urban Corridors Office Administrator
Approved by: John Conrad, Assistant Secretary for Engineering and Regional Operations

PURPOSE:

To provide an update on the project, with a focus on the recent events:

- Results of the Tolling Analysis.
- Outcome of the analysis regarding I-5 and the SR 520 8 lane alternative
- Results of March 2004 Accelerated Construction Conference.

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ACTION/OUTCOME:

Keep the Commission informed about progress on the SR 520 project. No specific action by the Commission is requested

BACKGROUND:

In the 03/05 biennium, the Legislature provided funds to further analyze an 8-lane alternative and its impacts and potential improvements on I-5 mainline. That work has been completed and was presented to the Executive Committee in April. In addition, a tolling analysis was completed to examine the revenue potential and traffic impacts of tolling a replacement SR 520 Bridge across Lake Washington. In March, the FHWA sponsored a workshop titled Accelerated Construction Technology Transfer (ACTT). The main goal of the workshop was to gather national design and construction experts to investigate opportunities for constructing the project in fewer years and potentially for less money.

DISCUSSION:

The analysis of the 8-lane alternative shows that the actions needed to accommodate the increased SR520 traffic on I-5 are technically difficult, a significant cost to the project and, most importantly, a much larger traffic issue on I-5 than what the SR 520 project might add. Continued analysis of the I-5 corridor will be done in the forthcoming I-5 Study which will look at the corridor between Northgate and Boeing Access Road. The findings on the traffic impacts to I-5 of the eight-lane SR 520 alternative will be reported in the SR 520 Draft EIS, but no further analysis of this alternative will be included.

The tolling analysis examined two bridge replacement alternatives. The six-lane alternative assumed two tolled general purpose lanes and one high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction, the latter providing toll-free passage for transit vehicles and carpools with three or more occupants. The four-lane alternative assumed two tolled general purpose lanes in each direction in the same basic configuration that exists today. In this case, 3+ HOV's were assumed to be tolled and only transit vehicles remained toll-free. A variety of financial scenarios were tested which yield a broad range of potential project funds. Several combinations appear capable of yielding approximately $700 million for the 6-lane alternative, and about 5-10% less for the 4-lane alternative. Moreover, it appears that this mid-range funding level could be achieved without causing undue adverse impact to other network facilities.

The ACTT conference resulted in several recommendations to expedite construction. Savings in construction could be 18-24 months. We are currently evaluating these recommendations, some of which require approvals from environmental permitting authorities.

We are currently on schedule to deliver the DEIS by late Spring 2005. Both the discipline reports and the DEIS will be prepared in the new "user friendly" manner, including the use of many more graphics, charts, and visual simulations.

RECOMMENDATION:

No recommendation is necessary.

For further information, contact: Maureen Sullivan, Project Director, at (206) 381-6436, or Julie Meredith, Engineering Manager, at (206) 381-6406.